

Part B

LEAD AGENCY/BUREAU AND/OR SUBCOMMITTEE/WORKING GROUP REPORT
(Agencies with Lead Responsibilities Assigned under the new Circular A-16 in Appendix E
- <http://www.fgdc.gov/publications/a16final.html#appendix>)

1. Program/Activity Name:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Branch of Habitat Assessment - National Wetlands Inventory Project

2. What are the specific federal programs this data supports?

NWI data supports resource management and decision-making by Federal Programs in and outside of the Service and Department. This scientific data is made publicly available over the Internet by the Service and is used by Federal and State entities in land management, acquisition, restoration, and assessment of fish and wildlife populations. This includes key programs related to Federal land and floodplain planning; watershed management; federal water/energy/transportation project planning; wetland restoration and permitting; and endangered species conservation and recovery planning.

3. Uses of Data: How does your data benefit customers and support agency missions?

The mission of the Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of people. Migratory birds, fishes, and endangered species need sufficient quality habitat in an ever-changing landscape. Wetlands occupy only 5% of the landscape of the conterminous United States, but play an important role in sustaining these trust resources and the Nation's environment and economic well-being. NWI data are being strategically updated and used by Service biologists and managers in consultation with States, tribes, and citizens in stewardship of National Wildlife Refuge lands and waters, for migratory bird conservation and habitat management, fishery restoration and protection, and habitat conservation and acquisition actions. The provision of this scientific and nationally standardized ecological data over the Internet benefits the public by providing current geospatial information on the location and status of wetlands to promote the understanding and conservation of wetland habitats.

4. Charter/Plan: Do you have a current charter or plan for collection? If so - please describe (include how recently the charter/plan was implemented and whether it is in need of update).

Yes. The Service's 2002 Strategic Plan for the NWI, titled *National Wetlands Inventory: A Strategy for the 21st Century*, was approved by the Department and provided to OMB for information purposes. This Plan was developed as an outgrowth from a 1999 OMB directive to the Service to update wetlands maps and make them available on the Internet. The Plan is being implemented, and the Service is strategically updating digital wetland maps, emphasizing wetland status and trend analyses, and intensifying assessments using wetlands data to help the

Service, decision-makers, and the public conserve aquatic habitats for fish, wildlife, and people. This Plan is in line with the DOI's draft Strategy to improve the scientific information base for resource management, technical assistance, and decision-making, as well as the Administration's Electronic Government initiatives. NWI digital map data are a major integral element of the Service's data holdings and enterprise architecture.

The Service also has Chair responsibilities for the FGDC Subcommittee on Wetlands Data, chartered by Exhibit dated September 30, 1991. This Exhibit addresses lead agency responsibility for the coordination of wetlands data related activities among Federal agencies and established a mechanism for the coordinated development, use, sharing, and dissemination of wetlands data financed in whole or in part by Federal funds. There are no plans to update the Exhibit at this time.

5. Metadata Status: Is metadata discoverable and served through the NSDI Clearinghouse? What percentage of this theme's data has metadata and is in a Clearinghouse node?

Yes. Of the 27,651 quadrangle maps of digital wetlands data that is available over the Internet, 99% has metadata discoverable and served through the NSDI Clearinghouse.

6. Standards: What is the status of this theme's data, process, transfer, and classification standards?

The Service developed and uses the *Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States*. This Service classification system is the federal standard for the ecological identification of wetlands that was approved by the FGDC on December 17, 1996. Since 1979, it has been the Service's policy to use this classification system for Service wetland-related issues and topics.

7. Progress: List FY 2002/2003 activities/progress to date (quantify where possible).

FY2002:

- \$ Complete and post on the Internet updated wetland maps for Connecticut, Georgia, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia.
- \$ Achieve complete digital wetlands coverage for North and South Dakota, and Virginia.
- \$ Digitize and provide online 12.3 million acres of final wetland maps.
- \$ Publish on the Internet *Geographically Isolated Wetlands: A Preliminary Assessment of Their Characteristics and Status in Selected Areas of the United States*, and 7 other analysis reports.
- \$ Complete a cumulative total of 42% of the United States with online digital wetland maps.

FY2003:

- \$ Begin updating of nearly 300 digital wetland maps at strategic locations in the United States and trust territories.
- \$ Complete digital wetlands coverage for Nebraska and South Carolina.

- \$ **Digitize and provide online an estimated 10 million acres of final wetland maps to reduce backlog of maps in need of updating.**
- \$ **Refine Interactive Wetland Map tool and Internet delivery of seamless digital data to keep pace with growing demand exceeding 1.5 million requests for wetlands information, and 1 million online requests for custom maps.**
- \$ **Complete transformation of all digital data into shape and geodatabase file formats to improve customer use, map updating, and assessment capabilities.**
- \$ **Complete a cumulative total of 43% of the United States with online digital wetland maps.**

8. Policy: Do you have a formal agency policy in place for full and open access or data sharing? Are you able to fulfill this policy and provide public access with your current agency financial resources as allocated or are you in pursuit of collaborative federal partnerships to support data access?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has an operational policy of full and open access to its digital wetlands and riparian data. The NWI Center in St. Petersburg, Florida, coordinates the production of wetland maps and digital data, provides national consistency of map products, and serves digital wetlands data over the Internet to fulfill this policy. The NWI is working collaboratively with the USGS to upgrade map updating, data verification, architecture, and Internet delivery capabilities.

9. Are there areas or issues regarding lead responsibilities for spatial data themes that require attention, or lessons-learned that you would like to share with others? Please describe.

No.

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